Administrator's Column

(In this column NASA Activities features an article by NASA Administrator James M. Beggs. These articles focus on subjects chosen by him that address topics of broad interest to the agency's employees. The columns this month features an address presented to employees and guests at the Headquarters Honors Awards Ceremony held June 12 in Washington, D.C.)

A Year to Remember

Events like this are always happy occasions for the NASA family, and this one is no exception.

There is an old Japanese proverb that says "Many words, little sense." I'm going to take that hint today. My words will be brief. And I hope they make some sense.

First, let me congratulate you all. This has been a year of fantastic success for NASA, and you have all helped to make it so. Let me thank you for hewing to the traditional NASA standard of excellence in all you do. I look forward to hearing more about your individual contributions later on.

G.K. Chesterton, the English essayist, once wrote that we are kept going in life by the notion of something around the corner. Certainly that has been true of NASA throughout its history. But, over the past 12 months, we have passed so many milestone that we have stopped counting corners.

There is a tendency around NASA to speak in terms of programs, or, forgive the pun, more cosmically, in terms of eras, rather than years. In our agency's relatively short lifetime, we have known the Apollo era and the pre- and post-Apollo eras. Now we are in the Shuttle era, and soon, will be moving into the Space Station era.

The habit of telescoping events in this way, of course, gives us a good perspective on our achievements. And, because there is great continuity in our work, or, perhaps, because we enjoy what we do so much, the highlights of any particular year tend to become blurred.

A ceremony like this one, though, gives us a chance to look back on the year and to place events in a somewhat different perspective. And what a year it has been!

There was our 25th Anniversary celebration at the Air and Space Museum with President Reagan in attendance. There was the successful tour of the Shuttle orbiter Enterprise through Europe and the remarkable turnout of millions who cheered her.

There was the Spacelab mission, our largest joint international cooperative project, and its many scientific and technological milestones.

There were the many firsts and they were truly historic. Among them were the first ascent of an American woman, Sally Ride, into space; and the first ascent of a black American, Guy Bluford; the first flight of payload specialists, one of whom, Ulf Merbold, became the first non-American to fly on the Shuttle. And we saw the first American spacewalk in nine years when Mission Specialist Don Peterson and Story Musgrave left the crew compartment and drifted into the Shuttle cargo bay to test tools and equipment.

We also saw the first night launch and landing of the Shuttle and its first landing at the Kennedy Space Center. Bob Crippen became the first man to fly in a Shuttle three times. And I'm happy to say he's scheduled for his fourth mission later this year.

The rescues of TDRSS and of the Solar Max satellite—one from the ground, the other from space—were extremely significant, not only from the programmatic and cost-saving point of view, but also because they reinforced the public image of NASA as a "can-do" agency, and that's extremely important for our future.

That future looks bright, indeed.

We continue to provide the first-rate research base and stimulus for American aviation. Our advanced turbo-prop program, promising jet-like speed, but with fuel savings of up to 30 per cent, is moving into its ground-test stage. Our laminar flow control technology also promises considerable fuel savings and is being readied for flight testing. We have put into initial operation our new Transonic Facility, which gives us a significant advance in ground-based research capability. The NTF, coupled with the Numerical Aerodynamic Simulation capability, on which we are moving forward, will give the United States the world's two premier aeronautical R&D facilities and help us maintain our aeronautical leadership, which is so vital to the nation.

We continue our search for new knowledge of our solar system, the galaxies and the universe. Our orbiting observatories, free from the atmosphere's obscuring effects, are continuing to unlock the mysteries, visible and invisible of the universe.

And we are preparing for a permanent manned presence in space—a base from which we will be able to extend our activities and do all of the things we have been dreaming of doing over the past quarter century.

In his January State of the Union message the President directed NASA to develop a Space Station and to have it in operation within a decade. He also invited

our friends and allies to join with us in developing the station. And he called for a government-industry partnership to encourage private sector investment in space-based business.

As you know, we are making progress on all three elements of the President's initiatives. Following Congressional approval, we will be moving into the planning and definition phase of the Space Station. I am very optimistic that we will have some good news on the international front by the end of the year. And we are working closely with industry, not only the aerospace industry, to ease the way for space-based investments.

What do our achievements of the past 12 months add up to?

To me they indicate that our program has demonstrated great reliability and dependability and a new maturity. We do what we set out to do. And, moreover, we make it look easy.

NASA has more than justified its existence and the taxpayer's investment and faith in us. We are indeed, a true national asset. And we can be proud of it.

Much of our success is due to people like you, people whose dedication to excellence, however difficult the task, is the bedrock foundation of this agency's strength.

"The reward of a thing well done is to have done it," wrote Emerson. We have earned that reward manyfold. And I believe we can face the future with pride and with confidence as we prepare for the great challenges of tomorrow.

NASA Transfers Ownership of Viking Lander 1 To Museum

NASA transferred ownership of Viking Lander 1, which is on the planet Mars, to the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., at ceremonies on May 18. This is the first time that a museum will have ownership of an object located on another planet.

The transfer, requested by the Museum's Director Walter Boyne, also includes loaning the official Viking Lander plaque. This plaque renames the lander the Thomas A. Mutch Memorial Station, in memory of the Viking Lander Imaging Team Leader and NASA Associate Administrator for Space Science, who died in a climbing accident in the Himalayas in 1980.

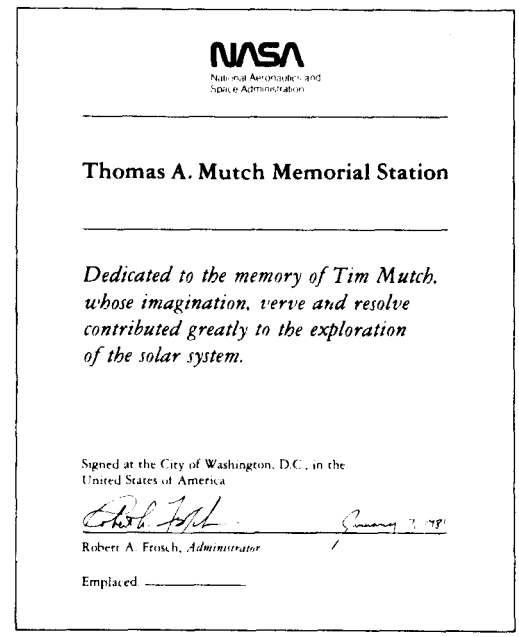
The plaque is scheduled to be placed on the original lander on Mars by American astronauts when they travel to the "Red Planet" at some indefinite time in the future. NASA retains reclaimant rights of the lander for scientific purposes.

The Viking Landers set down on the surface of Mars in 1976, the first American spacecraft to provide close-up views from the surface of another planet.

The landers provided invaluable knowledge of Mars through weather observations and chemical and biological tests. More than 54,000 photographs were taken by the landers and orbiters, which circled overhead. The orbiters also monitored atmospheric water vapor and temperature from the planet.

The Viking mission highlighted the United States Planetary Exploration Program's goals to explore our solar system to obtain a better understanding of the origin and evolution of life and the physical processes that shape man's terrestrial environment.

James M. Beggs, NASA Administrator, and Walter Boyne, Director of the National Air and Space Museum, sign the official documents transfering ownership of NASA's Viking I Lander (depicted in the background).



NASA
National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Thomas A. Mutch Memorial Station

Dedicated to the memory of Tim Mutch, whose imagination, verve and resolve contributed greatly to the exploration of the solar system.

Signed at the City of Washington, D.C., in the United States of America

Robert A. Frosch, *Administrator*

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